Social Questions

BULLETIN

of the Methodist Federation for Social Service (unofficial), an organization which rejects the method of the struggle for profit as the economic base for society; which seeks to replace it with social-economic planning in order to develop a society without class distinctions and privileges.

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The Conferences Go On Record

With the exception of the Newark Conference report the excerpts printed below are taken from Minutes of the Spring and Fall Conferences of 1938. Some of them were adopted as presented by the various committees or commissions (official and unofficial); some were modified before adoption, and others were merely spread on the Minutes as a matter of record. However, they are all genuine expressions of the social convictions of groups of Methodists, large or small, from New England to the Pacific coast.

THE SOCIAL ORDER

A social order so organized that a large percentage of its people are doomed to economic insecurity as to food, clothing, and health, demands a reconstruction that makes possible security for all.—*Missouri, Sept., 1938.*

We pledge ourselves to withdraw all expressions of approbation from non-creative ways of living, and refrain from doing honor to persons and institutions living without labor.

We pledge ourselves to work against all plans and devices for creating surpluses of workers, the effect of which always depresses the worker's income to levels where health and decency cannot be maintained. . . .

We . . . by the authority of successive General Conferences, declare the workers' right to organize, to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing, and to use such orderly and legal means as may be consistent with the spirit of Jesus. . . .

For the preservation of our historic institutions founded on the democratic principle, and to extend that principle, which is grounded in the dignity of personality and in the right of each person to share in determining the conditions of his life and work, we pledge ourselves to strive for an orderly change of business and industrial organization and practice, so that our economy may approach true democracy. Whenever the rights inherent in property assume dictatorial authority over the lives of persons, we will oppose such as un-Christian—*Southern California, June, 1938.*

We suggest making it clear that the true causes of economic distress are (a) moral—greed, (b) social—an economic system unfitted to distribute the product of a modern machine age.—*Pacific Northwest, June, 1938.*

The resources of the earth should be recognized as gifts of God to the whole human race. They should be used with a collective responsibility for a balanced distribution for the needs of present and future generations. Houses, health, security against the unavoidable hazards of misfortune and old age are the proper considerations of churchmen.—*Colorado, June, 1938.*

We recognize the right of labor as well as that of capital to organize. We affirm our faith in collective bargaining as best suited to the peaceful attainment of desired ends.—*Central New York, Sept., 1938.*

We recognize the now proven desirability of social ownership in such enterprises and properties as schools, parks, roads, city water and sewer systems and the postal service, and suggest consideration of further extending social ownership.—*New Jersey, Sept., 1938.*

We remain silent on questions of great social importance only at the expense of our souls. We must condemn wealth in the midst of poverty and physical need in the midst of plenty. (See *Methodist Discipline, 1936.*) We declare our belief in a planned economy, continuously adjusting economic effort to measured needs, cultural as well as material.—*Oregon, June, 1938.*

RELIEF STANDARDS

An economic order which is highly competitive and operated primarily for profit, and which feels no responsibility for the employment of all employable persons, of necessity creates unemployment for many persons. Such persons through no fault of their own are unable to support themselves and their dependents. Business depressions and the use of labor-saving machinery are so increasing the number of unemployed that it has now become a problem of local, state, and national government to properly care for them. Public relief, both direct relief and work relief, should be administered on a nonpartisan basis by persons under civil service.—*Northern Minnesota, Oct., 1938.*

We believe the combined efforts of the city, state and federal governments should guarantee work opportunities for all, that malnutrition among children and the undermining of the health of the unemployed should be prevented by adequate relief, and we urge the support of legislation toward these ends.—*New York East, May, 1938.*

We strongly recommend the adoption of high standards of relief work projects with adequate scope and sufficient

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numbers of projects to sustain not only the bodily health of workers, but also their spiritual morale. We further urge the payment of a decency standard rather than a starvation-level wage on all federal, state, or county work projects.—*Southern California, June, 1938.*

COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT

Since our whole industrial system is so much under question we suggest that our people study the cooperative system as it works in Norway and Sweden; and that we watch carefully the development of the cooperative movement in this country.—*Erie, Sept., 1938.*

The cooperative movement promises to bring closer together the Christian ideal of service and the social need of production and distribution. We accordingly plead for a closer study of this movement. . . .—*New England Southern, June, 1938.*

FREE SPEECH AND CIVIL RIGHTS

Talk, Talk! Thank God that here in America we *can* talk. Everybody feels perfectly free to talk about anything. Bishop McConnell says: "Let them talk. Somebody might accidentally say something worthwhile." We commend those communities where free speech has been maintained . . . as a fundamental American liberty. The constitutional right of minority groups to peaceably assemble and proclaim their views should never be denied. —*Erie, Sept., 1938.*

As citizens, we re-affirm our faith in democracy and our earnest desire to preserve it. Free speech and free assembly are a precious American heritage guaranteed by our Constitution. We register ourselves for the uncoerced freedom of the individual conscience as the inviolable right of every human being.—*Illinois, Sept., 1938.*

We view with concern the persistent efforts to foist upon our nation and our state the political forms and practices of the dictator-controlled nations of Europe. We condemn the Hague regime in Jersey City for its policy of intimidation, for its denial of the right of free speech and lawful assembly and for its efforts to carry its un-American practices into other communities. We urge our people to keep a careful watch upon local, as well as upon state government for the purpose of resisting any efforts toward the abridgment of our civil liberties. —*New Jersey, Sept., 1938.*

The Commission believes that in the handling of C.I.O. organizers and labor activities in Jersey City, there have been flagrant violations of the legal rights of peaceful assembly, freedom of speech and freedom of the press which should not be allowed to pass unchallenged. We recommend that the facts be brought to the attention of the Annual Conference by this Commission and that this Commission commend the action taken by Dr. George Hollingshead in opening old St. Paul's Church to the Workers' Defense League when convinced that all other places of assemblage had been denied to them.—*Newark, April, 1938.* (Adopted with 21 ministers going on record in protest.)

The discovery and application of a Christian system cannot be achieved without free discussion.—*New England Southern, June, 1938.*

It is necessary that we guard against lawless "vigilantism" which appears in the time of industrial conflict as "Law and Order Movements," "Back to Work Movements," but which deprives labor groups of their rightful constitutional liberty. . . .—*Detroit, June, 1938.*

We now seem to face a growing disposition on the part of some laymen to look with displeasure upon the expression of liberal opinion and an inclination to discipline the preacher who thinks for himself. . . . The social gospel is being challenged as to its rightful place among the materials of preaching . . . the voice of God can be heard only from a free and unfettered pulpit . . . it is always necessary for a true prophet to speak unpalatable truths . . . the social emphasis is an inherent and necessary part of the Gospel of Christ.—*Pittsburgh, Sept., 1938.*

WAR

From the Christian point of view . . . as well as from the viewpoint of democracy, justice is basic for a substantial peace. The next step in justice seems to require that raw materials, essential for a modern industrial civilization, shall be distributed by some peaceful means, rather than made the prize of war. Until this is done, desperate peoples seem certain to make war to acquire raw materials. Diplomacy, treaties that are easily broken, and abandoning of weaker nations to the greed of dictators are no substitutes for justice.—*North-East Ohio, Sept., 1938.*

We oppose all so-called war-profits legislation which rather guarantees than destroys the profits in war, and favor instead the nationalization of the munitions industry and taking the profits out of war.—*Pacific Northwest, June, 1938.*

We recommend that the Federal Government assume exclusive responsibility for the manufacturing of munitions of war and that the sale of such materials to individuals, groups, or nations be prohibited.—*Erie, Sept., 1938.*

We favor the nationalization of the munitions industry. —*Central Pennsylvania, April, 1938.*

The Commission recommends that the government shall in no way be responsible for private loans to foreign governments engaged in war, nor shall force be used to collect from foreign nations or their citizens debts incurred by our citizens or industries in time of peace or war.— *Wisconsin, Sept., 1938.*

NEUTRALITY OR COLLECTIVE ACTION

We call upon our government either to enforce or make such changes in the Neutrality Act as will stop the exportation of munitions and raw materials to aggressor nations. We recommend non-cooperation in business with aggressor nations. We believe such a program as this will give support to those who suffer the ravages of war as in China, Spain, and Czechoslovakia, without involving the United States in the business of war.— *Central New York, Sept., 1938.*

We petition the President and Government of the United States to take such measures as will be found practical to prevent the material and financial resources of this country, including scrap iron, oil and gasoline and other materials, from being used to further the invasion of China and the civil war in Spain, by altering the present Neutrality Act and that our government ease the suffering of the Chinese people by extending a substantial loan from our great surplus of wheat and cotton to the government of China.—*Genesee, Oct., 1938.*

We remind you that the principle of neutrality, which we condemned in our report last year, has already proved its uselessness. Although a Neutrality Act was passed by Congress, the Chief Executive has practically repudiated it. No move was made in Congress to censure him for so doing. Because neutrality offends the instinctive moral sense of our people. Having for all practical purposes abandoned the negative policy of neutrality, a positive policy in world affairs is all the more incumbent upon us as a nation and as individuals.

We must advocate and help to secure the adoption of a policy of collective security upon the part of the world's democracies, those peoples who believe in international law and order, in collective consideration and decision upon those questions which affect mankind, and in united action in putting those decisions into effect. The League of Nations [now that Germany, Italy and Japan are no longer members] is a better agency than ever for doing this. We re-affirm our belief that America should join it.—*New York, April, 1938.* (Words in brackets stricken out by Conference.)

RACE DISCRIMINATION

We condemn the fallacious reasoning of racial superiority. This Conference has again and again taken its stand in defending the rights of those of the colored race. The Illinois Conference now re-utters its protest against discrimination such as "Jim Crow" cars, lesser educational opportunity, and segregated seats in public meeting places, etc.

We emphatically denounce the persecution of the Jewish race in which unmerited suffering is heaped upon helpless minorities regardless of personal character or guilt and solely upon a racial basis.—*Illinois, Sept., 1938.*

It is said that Communists and Labor Unions succeed better than Christians in divesting their thoughts and actions of all traces of race prejudice. If this be true it is a serious reflection upon our actual Christian attainments. We pledge ourselves to remove this stigma wherever we have the opportunity to do so, and not to be content until we have exhausted every means for the realization of universal brotherhood.—*Northern Minnesota, Oct., 1938.*

We deplore the persecution of minorities in Europe. . . . We express our judgment that such persecution is anti-Christian, inhuman, and a reversion to barbarism.—*Nebraska, Sept., 1938.*

We condemn vigorously the persecution of any group or people because of race or religion, and at this time particularly disapprove such organizations as the Silver Shirts and the German Bunds insofar as they attempt to stir up hatred against Jews or Negroes or to deprive them or other groups of their rights and privileges as American citizens.—*Wisconsin, Sept., 1938.*

FASCISM

Fascism is an effort to turn civilization backward toward the ideas of the Dark Ages. Fascism promotes war as a national policy. Fascism robs men of their freedom, breeds women like cattle, and stimulates racial and national hatreds. Fascism sneers at the equality of men, brands the people as "the herds," and insists upon "one party, one government, one leader," who is "always right," because he is "infallible." Posing as a crusade for God, Fascism in practice violates every standard of the Christian religion.—*Philadelphia, March, 1938.*

We oppose Fascism in every form whether it be by censorship of the public press; or by interference with free speech; or by the unauthorized substitution of military authority for civil authority. Moreover, the Committee on Social Action would welcome from the members of the conference the report of incidents for investigation that in their eyes seem to have a Fascist tinge—such as mobilization days; the abrogation of civil liberties, etc.—*Maine, April, 1938.*

M. F. S. S.

We must lend aid to the Methodist Federation for Social Service and all other agencies which serve as bulwarks in defense of our liberties.—*New England Southern, June, 1938.*

When the Social Service Commission of the Ohio Annual Conference commends the Methodist Federation for Social Service as a fact-finding and Kingdom-promoting group, it does so with no desire to bind any man on its Commission or in this Conference to entire agreement with all its policies or findings. What it does is to stand four-square in defense of freedom of speech, and to protect brethren who see otherwise than do we, against the accusations of privilege-crazed opponents.—*Ohio, Sept., 1938.*

We recommend the careful study of the literature published by the Methodist Federation for Social Service in regard to the church, industry, collective bargaining and other related issues.—*New England, May, 1938.*

Biennial Conference

KANSAS CITY, MAY 9-11

TENTATIVE PROGRAM

Tuesday, May 9

9:00 a.m. Registrations.

10:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Reports and Recommendations. From the office: Helen G. Murray. From the field: Charles C. Webber.
Symposium by representatives from regional areas on "What We Are Up Against and What We Have Done," led by C. C. W.

2:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. Reports and Recommendations (continued).
Report on "Issues"; Harry F. Ward.
Discussion.

6:00 p.m.-9:30 p.m. Dinner: "Freedom and Democracy"; "A Free Pulpit"; "Civil Liberties"; "Anti-Semitism"; "Fascist Symptoms" (Bishops McConnell, Blake, Baker, Kern, Oxnam).

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Membership $1.00 per year
Special rate to student groups.

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Wednesday, May 10

9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. The Labor Problem: Wagner Act; Unity; Unemployment; Relief; Social Security.
Discussions opened by ——?

2:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. "Our Position on Foreign Policy": Results of Our Referendum.
Presented by ——?

6:00 p.m.-9:30 p.m. Dinner or Open Session.
"The Tenant Farmers', Sharecroppers' and Agricultural Workers' Problems"; "The Race Question"; "Anti-Semitism"; "The Wagner Act."
Presented by ——?

Thursday, May 11

9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Federation matters: Publications; Membership; Relation to Southern Group; Finances, etc.

2:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. Elections and Report of Findings Committee. Adjournment; Executive Committee Meeting.

Our Biennial Conference which met two years ago in May in Evanston is to meet this year in Kansas City. The Uniting Conference begins on April 26 and we have set the date for ours on May 9 to 11. Many of our members are undoubtedly already planning to be in Kansas City for the Uniting Conference, others can plan to include both Conferences in their spring itinerary if it is suggested to them. Make up a car load, share expenses and drive through.

The program, as it appears above, is a tentative draft drawn up by a sub-committee of the Program Committee and is now being referred to you for your further suggestions. Whom do you want for speakers and discussion leaders? Write in.

Vital issues are to be discussed at this Conference; our future course of action must be determined. The best way to influence Federation policies is to help formulate them!

Test Poll

In preparation for the decisions of the National Meeting at Kansas City in May, your Executive Committee has ordered a test poll of our membership on the question of our policy in relation to the international situation.

The ballot is printed below. Every member is asked to fill it out and mail it immediately to the office. It will be concluded that those who do not respond are either too uncertain in their minds or have not sufficient interest in the question to express themselves. Those who support alternative policies which they desire the Federation to adopt should write them out and enclose them with their ballot.

The question is put in the simplest and clearest possible form: continuance or discontinuance of the present policy. That policy is broadly described as "economic non-cooperation" with aggressor nations. It includes the question of economic cooperation with their victims and raises the issue of concerted action. It is understood that the term "aggressor" means the nation invading or otherwise attacking another nation with military force, or supplying aid to forces in another nation revolting against a democratically constituted government—specifically at present Japan, Germany and Italy.

The concrete expression of the policy of economic non-cooperation, approved for the second time by the Executive Committee at its last meeting and to stand until the National Meeting in May, is:

1. The Boycott of, that is the refusal to buy, Japanese, German and Italian goods.
2. An Embargo upon the shipment of arms, munitions, implements of war, secondary war materials and upon the supplying of credit facilities to the aggressor nations.
3. Selling the victims of aggressive warfare the means of defense under conditions designed in each case to remove the risk of our being drawn into war, *e.g.*, adaptations of the cash-and-carry principle.
4. Concerted action between the popular democratic forces in the democratic nations to promote in common the policies expressed under 1, 2 and 3 and to bring about for this purpose a conference of official representatives of the nations governed under democratic constitutions.

The advocacy of these policies by representatives of the Federation has been accompanied by expressions of support for conference with the present aggressor nations on ways and means to meet their economic needs on condition that their invasions cease and that their aggressions are abandoned.

The Executive Committee has approved these policies because it believes them to be the only possible substitute for war in dealing with the aggressor nations and because it regards them as less likely to lead to war than any other possible course of action. It is on this point that judgments differ. All of us, no matter on which side we vote, are against war.

BALLOT

Do you desire the continuance of the present Federation policy as outlined above? Vote "yes" or "no" on:

1. ***Boycott*** ..... ***Yes*** ☐ ***No*** ☐
2. ***Embargo*** ..... ***Yes*** ☐ ***No*** ☐
3. ***Sale to victims of aggressor nations*** ..... ***Yes*** ☐ ***No*** ☐
4. ***Concerted action*** ..... ***Yes*** ☐ ***No*** ☐

Name_____